

More and More Networks ‘Talking’ After-Shows

By: Michael Malone

The After-Show, that lively talker breaking down the just-concluded episode of a hit show, is picking up in popularity, with more set to launch in the coming weeks.

TLC’s reality series *Counting On* started its after-show on July 17. USA’s *ChrisleyKnows Best* starts off season five Sept. 12 with a new after-show, *According to Chrisley*, and CBS All Access rookie *Star Trek: Discovery* will launch next month with an after-show called *Talking Trek*.

The latter’s title is a nod to the well-established AMC after-shows, including *Talking Dead*, *Talking Saul* and *Talking Preacher*.

The most popular after-shows follow hit programs with particularly dedicated fan bases that love to dissect the current episode on social media. Sony Pictures Entertainment’s Embassy Row produces several, including *Talking Dead*. President Michael Davies spends much of his day wondering how after-shows will evolve, such as how best to reach the fans that don’t watch a hit show at its appointed time.

“I can’t believe they haven’t been on television forever,” he said of after-shows. “They perform better than any show could coming out of a hit show, and keep the audience in the theater at a much lower cost.”

Davies said the after-show cost for Embassy Row productions ranges from the mid-five figures per episode, to “pretty significant six figures.”

A Younger ‘Younger’

Other popular after-shows include *The Royal Hangover*, which follows episodes of E!’s *The Royals*; *El Chapo Ilimitado*, which airs after El Chapo on Univision, and one for TLC’s *This is Life Live*. The typical after-show airs on Facebook Live, though AMC’s have slots on linear TV.

The after-show for TV Land’s *Younger*, which debuted after the June 28 season four premiere, is called *Getting Younger* and is hosted by Sirius XM talent Taylor Strecker. Its genesis was tied to giving hardcore fans more of the series than its normal half hour a week. “We have a really loyal fan base that tunes in and converses on social media,” Frank Tanki, TV Land general manager, said. “It seemed like an opportunity to extend the show a bit.”

Getting Younger is shot live in front of a Manhattan audience. The program runs on Facebook at 10:30 p.m. weekly, after *Younger* ends. It offers guest interviews, a discussion about the episode, and “man on the street” segments.

Tanki said fans of *Younger* have long pushed TV Land to extend the show to an hour. The after-show, in effect, does that. “There’s a lot to play with in the *Younger* world,” he said, “that you can’t get into in 30 minutes of TV.”

A hardcore fan base deeply engaged in social media is the common denominator between the most popular after-shows. AMC executives witnessed this every time an episode of *The Walking Dead* would air, which prompted them to premiere *Talking Dead*, hosted by Chris Hardwick, back in 2011.

“Every time we’d premiere a new episode, we were happy, and in many ways, shocked, to find the level of fan engagement we saw online,” said Charlie Collier, president and general manager of AMC and SundanceTV.

A great host — one who is, ideally, a member of the show’s fervent fan base — is key to an after-show being deemed legitimate by those who love the main series. Collier said AMC’s *Talking* shows thrive because Hardwick is the real deal. “He’s authentic — that’s what makes him so good as host,” Collier said.

AMC found a slot on TV for *Talking Dead* at a time when Facebook Live did not exist. But Facebook is the prime platform for many of the shows. Viewers are more engaged on it than other social media sites, and can easily share content, loop in friends, and weigh in on something the host may be saying.

Loyal to ‘Royals’

The Royal Hangover runs on Facebook Live at 11 p.m., following the conclusion of *The Royals* episodes on E! Its first season was on Snapchat, but it was moved to Facebook due to the site’s popularity among the show’s hardcore viewers, who are known as “The Loyals.”

Creator Mark Schwahn appeared on all episodes of *The Royal Hangover* last season, sharing his thinking behind key storylines with fans.

The after-show was launched to capitalize on all the social activity dedicated to *The Royals*. “We were trying to convert our superfans into advocates on our behalf,” Jen Neal, E!’s executive VP of marketing and executive producer of live events, said.

Neal said there’s a constant conversation internally about the prospect of moving *The Royal Hangover* to linear TV, though that’s not yet been done.

So entrenched on the AMC schedule are the *Talking* shows that Collier doesn’t even think of them as after-shows. “We don’t view them as a support series. We very much view them as their own programs.”

Talking Dead, for one, gets enviable ratings. For its most recent season, the show averaged 2.9 million viewers 18-49 in Nielsen’s live plus three ratings, and 4.9 million total viewers. “It doesn’t satisfy as many fans as *The Walking Dead* does,” said producer Davies, “but we satisfy something they want in addition to *The Walking Dead*.”

Not every after-show is a smash. The Bill Simmons-produced *Game of Thrones* after-show, *After the Thrones*, had aired on HBO Go and HBO Now and was available on demand. It shifted to Twitter and Periscope for *Game of Thrones*' season seven, and was renamed *Talk the Thrones*.

Davies noted how several digital after-shows exist for *Game of Thrones*, though none are backed by HBO. "I'd rather be in control of that conversation," he said, "instead of letting other people have it."

Like Collier, Davies views after-shows very much as their own series, as opposed to offshoots of hit shows. TV Land's Tanki said the key to delivering a strong after-show is giving it the same kind of attention that the hit show's producers give their series.

"It has to be scrubbed with as much love as the show itself," he said. "It's a lot of work putting on a mini show every week. It's nerve wracking, and it's exciting."